CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES.

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EDITED BY

AYLETT RAINS.

Earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.—JUDE.

ON THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS.

(CONCLUDED.)

It was, however, you clearly see, of the greatest advantage to the evidence of the truth of Christianity in distant ages, that the bulk of the Jewish nation should from the beginning have been hostile to it; while at the same time the belief of such numbers of them, prejudiced as they must have been against it, is an abundant proof of its truth.—But when, by the long continued enmity of the Jews to Christians, it shall be sufficiently evident, that it was no scheme of that nation in general, and that, so far from giving it any aid in its infant state, they discountenanced it as much as it was in their power to do it; if ever they should be converted to Christianity, before or after their return to their own country (both which events are foretold in the Scriptures) it will be such a clear fulfilment of prophecy, as it seems probable that no person of incredulity will be able to resist; and then, as Paul says, Rom. xi. 15. *If the casting away of the Jews be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?*

I shall conclude this part of my discourse by observing, that the truth of Christianity is founded upon plain *facts*, such as any persons who had the use of their senses might be judges of. Opinions of other kinds, men may become so fully persuaded of, as even to die for them, as well as Christians have done for their religion; but then the *nature* and *ground* of their faith have been different; they having been either misled by an *implicit faith* in persons who they

thought could not mislead them, or by *reasoning wrong*. That Mahomet, for example, or Swedenborg, had divine missions, many might be induced to believe on their own confident assertions, having a good opinion of the men; or they might imagine that the conquests of Mahomet and his followers could not have been so great and so rapid, if his pretensions had not been well founded. But is this such *kind* of evidence as that on which we believe Christianity; which neither requires that implicit faith be given to any person, nor any reasoning, except the plainest of all, viz. that if any person do such works as God only could enable him to do, he must be empowered by God to do them, and the evidence of their own senses that such works were done? The truth of Christianity rests on the evidence of such visible marks of divine power as the instant curing of the most dangerous disorders, and the raising of persons, and especially of Jesus himself, from a state of actual death, with respect to which men who had only eyes, ears, and other natural senses, could not possibly be deceived; whereas no visible miracle of any kind was so much as pretended to by either Mahomet or Swedenborg.

We also see the great difference of the ground of belief in these cases in the time that was requisite to produce their effect. Mahomet was several years in persuading any besides a very few persons, particularly connected with him, and who had a prospect of being gainers by his success, of his divine mission, and it was thirteen years before he had followers enough to venture to take the field with them, so as to attack a caravan, to which they were led by the hope of plunder. As to Swedenborg, though he died several years ago, his followers are only just now beginning to make themselves conspicuous. On the contrary, it is evident that Jesus might, if he had been so disposed, have mustered as large an army as he chose within a month or two after he appeared in a public character.

Some are so incredulous as to say, that, admitting all the facts recited in the gospel history, viz. that the apostles, and other disciples of Jesus, had no doubt of his resurrection, and that their previous incredulity was overcome by the most satisfactory evidence; yet that it was more probable that their senses, that of feeling, as well as those of

seeing and hearing, were repeatedly imposed upon, than that there should have been a proper resurrection of a man who had been dead. But such a deception as this could not have been effected without a miracle; and for what end could such a miracle have been wrought? As it had all the effect of a real resurrection, it is liable to all the same objections, and therefore if the one was produced, the other might be also.

If any person will say either that the appearances recorded in the New Testament are no proofs of a real resurrection, or (which has also been said) that the real resurrection of Jesus would be no proof of his divine mission, and of the truth of his religion, so that we could not thence infer the certainty of our own resurrection, they must be so constituted, as that no evidence whatever can produce that conviction in their minds. The Divine Being himself (and I must in this argument suppose that there is such a Being) could not do it. For all that *he* could do to attest the divine mission of any person could only be his enabling him to work miracles, or to do such things as only he himself, the author of nature, could do. But no person, in the age of the apostles, or any subsequent one, ever believed the facts, and doubted the conclusion; so that the miracles were fully adequate to the purpose of them; and since all men are, no doubt, constituted alike, the present objectors must be under the influence of a prejudice that nothing can overcome, and this must be a case exactly similar to insanity.

I now proceed to shew that the solution of such difficulties as these, respecting the truth of *revealed religion*, may assist those who have similar difficulties with respect to *natural religion;* and all great moral truths have, directly or indirectly, a connexion with each other.

Now it seems to be impossible for any person to be convinced by historical evidence (which is the most intelligible of all evidence whatever) of the miracles, the death, and resurrection of Christ, and at the same time to have any doubt of the being and the providence of God, because the one evidently implies the other. If Christ actually wrought miracles, and, after dying, rose from the dead, there must have been a *power* that enabled him so to do; and this

must have been an intelligent, or a designing, and a benevolent power, the laws of nature having been changed for great and good purposes.

It is in vain for any person to say, as some, however, have done, that till we be satisfied with the being of a God, which, in the order of nature, is the first of all religious truths, it is to no purpose to enquire into the evidence of christianity. For though it be most convenient to *teach*, and to *consider*, any system of truths in a certain order, the *discovery* of them is altogether independent of that order. In this case, *the first may be last, and the last first.*

An Englishman, for example, may say, and plausibly enough, that he ought to understand his own country, before he explores any other. But it may happen that he shall be carried to Asia, Africa or America, before he can have seen much of his own country, and thereby have a better opportunity of exploring *them* than his own. Or, considering the sun as the centre of our system, he might fancy that till we know what that great body is, it is absurd to give much attention to the *planets*, which depend upon it. But in this way he might live and die without acquiring any knowledge of them at all.—Even the several propositions in geometry may be learned in a very different order, as the different treatises on that branch of science evince, and yet be all equally well understood at the last. In like manner may men attain to the knowledge of God, and of his providence, without beginning with the study of them.

An atheist is a person who believes that there is no Being who established the present order of nature, but that all things have always been as they now are, and that all deviations from this order are absolutely impossible, and therefore incredible. Consequently, any clear proof of an actual deviation from this order of nature overturns his whole system. The atheist says that, since we must suppose something to have been *uncaused*, we may just as well content ourselves with saying that the present visible system had no cause, as suppose that something still greater than this system, and the cause of it, had no cause; since by ascending higher, we get no nearer to the solution of our great difficulty, viz. the *cause of what exists*. But the proof any miracle is decisively in favor of the actual exis-

tence of a power unquestionably above the common course of nature, and different from it. This is no less than a demonstration, that the reasoning of the atheist, however specious, is *in fact* wrong; and that, difficult as it may be to conceive the self-existence, as we say, of a Being greater than the visible universe, such a Being certainly does exist. I shall endeavor to make this argument plainer by an illustration.

Let a person unacquainted with clocks, watches, and other machines, be introduced into a room containing many of them, all in regular motion.—He sees no maker of these machines, and knows nothing of their internal structure; and as he sees them all to move with perfect regularity, he may say, on the principles of the atheistical system, that they are *automata*, or self-moving machines; and so long as all these machines continue in regular motion, and he knows nothing of the making of them, or the winding of them up, this theory may appear plausible.

But let us suppose that, coming into this room again and again, and, always attending to the machines, he shall find one of them much out of order, and that at length its motion shall entirely cease; but that after continuing in this state some time, he shall again find it in perfect order, moving as regularly as ever. Will he not then conclude that some person, whom he has not seen, but probably the maker of the machines, had been in the room in his absence? The restoration of motion to the disordered machine would impress his mind with the idea of a *maker* of them in a much more forcible manner than his observing the regular construction, and uniform motion. It must convince him of the existence of some person capable of *regulating*, and therefore probably of *making*, these machines, whether he should ever see the person or not.

Thus do miracles prove the existence of a God in a shorter and more satisfactory manner than the observation of the uninterrupted course of nature. If there be a Being who can *controul* the course of nature, there must be one who originally *established it*, in whatever difficulty we may still be left with respect to his nature, and the manner of his existence. We are compelled by a greater difficulty to admit a less, [illegible]

At all events, we see in miracles that there certainly exists a Being superior to ourselves, or any thing that is the object of our senses.

And thus is demonstrated the wisdom of the general plan of Divine Providence, in ordering that the laws of nature should not always proceed without interruption, but in providing that the attention of mankind should sometimes be arrested by miraculous events; since they are eminently calculated to lead the minds of men to the consideration of a superior Being, as the cause of all events, ordinary and extraordinary. Thus also is evident the folly and ignorance of those who think all miraculous events to be so absurd as to be in their own nature incredible, and therefore that any evidence in their favor can deserve the least attention. If the reverence of mankind for their Maker be of any use, or of any consequence to their happiness, which undoubtedly it is, occasional miracles have the greatest propriety, and therefore great antecedent credibility, though all the particular facts require very circumstantial evidence, because they are not of frequent occurrence.

I now come to draw some practical inferences from the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus.

Such is the evidence of the resurrection of Jesus, exclusive of the general evidence of christianity, or of the miracles of Jesus, and those of the apostles after him, which are also another confirmation of the truth of this one great event. And, surely, it appears that the circumstances attending the resurrection of Jesus were so ordered by Divine Providence, that it is not in the power of man to imagine any change in them that, according to the known laws of evidence, would make it more credible than it is with respect to distant ages. Every objection that has hitherto been made to this evidence has led to more rigorous examination of the circumstances; and the consequence of this has always been an addition of light upon the evidence and a greater confirmation of it. We are therefore abundantly authorized to consider our faith as *founded upon a rock*, which no future objection will be able to shake.

Since, therefore, we may consider it as a certain and unquestionable fact, that *Christ is risen from the dead*, we

may likewise, with the apostles, consider him as *the first fruits of them that slept*, or that his resurrection is a pledge and assurance of our own, which it is the great object of christianity to enforce. Christ is called the *first fruits*, and these are the forerunners of a general harvest. *Afterwards*, says the apostle, *they that are Christ's, at his coming*. For Christ has only left the present scene for a time. If there be any truth in the facts, the evidence of which has now been laid before you, he will certainly come again, and that *with power and great glory*, to raise the dead, and to give unto every man according to his works.

Let us, therefore, my Christian brethren, be continually looking for this great event, this *great day of God*, as it is sometimes called. For to all of us it is *nigh, even at the doors*. Long as the sleep of death may really be, it will appear to us to be only a moment. In death we, as it were, only shut our eyes upon this world, and immediately open them in another, with the brightest and most glorious prospects, if our conversation has been such as becomes the gospel, but with the most gloomy and dreadful ones, if this great light *hath come into the world, and we have loved darkness rather than light, because our deeds were evil*.

The mere profession of christianity will avail us nothing, because it lays us under stronger obligations to a virtuous life, and therefore will aggravate our condemnation if we do not live, as by ranking with christians, we profess to live. Better, far better, would it be for us, at the day of judgment, to be able to say we had never heard of Christ, than *naming the name of Christ*, or professing his religion, not to have been thereby led to *depart from iniquity*, and to be to him *a peculiar people zealous of good works*.

Christianity is much less to be considered as a system of doctrines, than as a rule of practice. Nay, the doctrines themselves (the chief of which is that of a future state of retribution) have no other object than the regulation of our lives. What the great duties of the christian life are, we are all sufficiently acquainted with. They are comprehended in two great precepts, the first of which is the love of God with all our hearts, implying an entire and cheerful devotedness to his will, in doing and in suffering, in life and in death. And the second is the loving of our neigh-

bour as ourselves, implying a readiness, in all cases, to do to others as we should think it right that they should do to us. We should all habitually consider one another as brethren, the children of the same great universal parent, in the care of the same benevolent providence, as training up in the same school of moral discipline here, and as heirs together of the same glorious hope of eternal life hereafter.

To fit us for these devotional and social duties, we should also be careful to exercise a constant government over our appetites and passions, that, as the apostle says, we may preserve ourselves as the *unpolluted temples of the spirit of God.*

Thus, my christian brethren, *knowing our duty, happy shall we be if we do it;* that when our Lord, after his long absence, shall return to *take an account of his servants,* when *our eyes, and every eye shall see him, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming;* but having duly improved the talents committed to each of us, may hear from his mouth the joyful sentence, "*Well done good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord.*"

ESSAY ON THE PROSPECTS OF IMMORTALITY.

No. I.

"In the beginning," while yet the plastic skill of the Creator, had not been displayed in creating this Universe, "*the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was on the face of the deep.*" Then went forth the *fiat* of the Almighty. "He spake and it was done, He commanded and it stood fast." The dry land was formed in its place, and the waters in their place. The sun, the moon, the stars and all the lights of the firmament, shone in their native glory, while animal, and vegetable nature sprang into existence, and all the works of God, "*each after its kind,*" pursued their pre-destined courses, in subordination to the mandates of the Supreme Architect!

But over all the other works of God, man stood pre-eminent! "*With countenance erect, and noble mien,*" he was formed the highest link in animated nature, and from his physical organization, as well as his mental superiority, seemed destined to some illustrious vocation! The lower orders of sensitive creatures beheld him with respect, and even the noblest did him homage! Being inspired with the breath of life—a ray from the uncreated Divinity, he was susceptible of unlimited improvement, so that from childlike ignorance, he could rise to the mental measure of a Locke, a Newton, or an angel, and continue throughout the whole of his existence, to make ever nearer approaches to his Creator.

Thus did the Almighty finish his works, by ordaining man lord of "*earth's wide domains:*" at which time the heavenly intelligences, with extacy surveyed the wonders of our sublime mansion, and "*the morning stars sang together! and all the sons of God shouted for joy!*"

Thus was man created in the "*image*" of God, and was hence called his Son! Having a moral intellectual nature capable of mental improvement, God condescended to instruct him *viva voce*, in order to qualify him for the discharge of such duties as would necessarily devolve on him, from the noble powers which had been given him, and the exalted rank which he was destined to sustain, in the scale of intellectual existence.

Without the *viva voce* communications, or revelations of God, man, however dignified his original nature might have been, could never have known his Creator nor have been capable of acting as an accountable being, under his moral government. The five senses, being the only inlets or avenues, through the medium of which the soul can receive information from any external quarter, communications,

designed for the instruction of man, must be adapted to these senses, and as all our simple ideas are only the effects of impressions, made on the brain, through the senses, by the notices of external objects, without a direct notice, or revelation from God in the first instance, no man could ever have had conceptions of a Supreme Being, there being no archetype, in all created nature, of a form suited to the impressing of such an idea.

The above facts are just as obvious to my mind, as that the letters on this paper, are impressions, made by types, which existed, antecedently to their impressions. Hence I not only say, that the five senses are the only inlets to the soul, and that all our simple ideas are the effects of impressions made on the brain, by external objects, through the medium of these senses, but I say, that the fact that we have an idea of God, is a proof incontrovertible, not only of his existence, but of his having also revealed himself to man in some way, because that without the aid of revelation, there could have been no impression by a celestial archetype, and consequently, no impression of the Divine existence.

Now as we see men, almost every where, even among the savage and ferocious tribes of our species, believing in the existence of a Supreme Being, is it not reasonable to suppose that God in the infancy of time, revealed himself by colloquial intercourse with the progenitors of our race, and that the things which He by this intercourse made known to them, were partly by tradition, and partly by history, handed to posterity, and perpetuated in the world, so that in this way, information concerning the existence of a Divine Being, has been extended, throughout all the ramifications of human society?

If the above supposition be admissible, it will follow,

that God in revealing himself to man, used an archetype, formed by himself, with which he, I had almost said, indelibly impressed the idea of himself on the minds of his creatures, which idea, was afterwards communicated from one, to another, by oral intercourse between men, and was consequently made the common property of every nation, tribe, kindred, and tongue!

But it was not my intention to dwell at this time, on this subject. The prospects of immortality, are what at present engage my attention, and I introduce the above topic, under the conviction, that were we destitute of revelation, our prospects for immortality would be very poor! Had we no faith in a Supreme Being, we could have no hope of eternal life!

There is, however, one topic more, which I wish to notice, by way of introduction to our main subject. There are men who admit the possibility of revelation, and who at the same time deny the necessity of it. They enthrone reason, and argue its all sufficiency, unaided by supernatural communications. But let it be observed, that these gentlemen do not consider that it is the faculty of reason in man, which renders a revelation necessary to his welfare. Were men *brutes*, they would not need a revelation, for a revelation is neither beneficial to *brutes* nor to *brutish* men!! This fact may be illustrated by the SUN, and the human EYE. The power of vision, which the Creator has beneficently bestowed on man, renders the luminary of day an object of incalculable value, and utility. But if men had no eyes, the sun to them would be a valueless orb! Now as the sense of seeing, is a reason why the sun should shine, so the faculty of reason, presents an argument of equal cogency, in behalf of the necessity of divine revelation; and hence if a man should argue, that because a PERSON

has a good pair of eyes there is, therefore, no need of natural light, he would not err more egregiously, than does he, who because man is endued with the faculty of reason, argues, that there is no need of celestial light.

May kind heaven protect the youth of our country from the influence of those *sceptical wiseacres*, who while they are laboring to rid themselves of the restraints of religion, are prostrating the most sacred and refined joys and privileges that ever man was heir to, and who are sapping at the same time the very foundations of our moral edifice!

To those who believe that the Bible is a history of the revelations of God, we may say, that God has at "*sundry times*," and in "*divers manners*," spoken by his *Son*, the *prophets*, the *apostles*, and *others*, to our ancestors, concerning the things which "*belong to our peace*," by which he has lain a permanent foundation "for a *sure* and *steadfast* hope," to which we have been "begotten, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead;" even "to an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled and unfading." And not only so, but we have been impregnated by the "word of truth, the gospel of our salvation," the testimony concerning the resurrection of Jesus, that we might be "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever!"

The Divine Being has made it to be the privilege of every christian, from Peter, to whom were given the "keys of the kingdom of God," to the smallest babe under the "reign of favor," "to know, what is the hope of the christian calling, and what is the riches, of the glory, of his inheritance in the saints." *Jesus* having taken *flesh* and *blood* in its lowest estate, sin only excepted, has carried our *nature*, through poverty, ignominy, and the shadow of death! On the cross he suffered in our *nature!* In the sepulchre he

was buried in our *nature!* And now on the throne of the Universe, in peerless majesty, clothed with primeval light, He sits in our *nature*, a King eternal and immortal, a model of what all the sons of God will ultimately be;—"for though it doth not yet appear what we shall be, we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him."

We see then, that, according to the "sure word of prophesy," the dignity of which *human nature* is susceptible, and the elevated sphere which *it* is destined to fill, were exemplified in the exaltation of Messiah, and are presented to us in the gospel, so that all who believe the testimony which God has given of his Son, may rejoice in "hope of eternal life, and have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

If therefore, we have correct views of the *nature*, *birth*, *life*, *death*, *resurrection*, *ascension* and *glorification* of our *Redeemer*, and consequently of the dignity of which *human nature* is susceptible, such views cannot fail to inspire us with "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, temperance," and in short with every possible virtue. "Every man," says John, "that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure:" to which I will add the words of a poet.

"Give me the light of this bright sun to see,
All other lights like meteors are to me;
Give me that way, that pleasant path to know,
I'll walk no other path while here below.
Would'st thou be wise? this wisdom learn to scan,
Which brings to God, the wandering heart of man."

This view of the subject is alone compatible with the original nature of man, and consequently is most conducive to his growth in morality, religion and happiness. As man in his original organization, was manifestly superior

to the whole animal creation, in just such proportion is his destiny higher than theirs, and therefore any scheme which would level him with the brutes that perish, cannot but counteract his original nature, and thereby produce disorder, vice and misery. If the destiny of man be in no way different from that of the mole, the oyster, or the ox, no good reason can be shown why his faculties should so essentially have differed from theirs. The herds of animals which roam over our earth, in quest of food, know no want beyond present animal gratification. They eat, drink and sleep, and anticipate but little of the future. But this is far from being the case with man. He is so formed, that he perhaps enjoys more by anticipation, than in any other way. But this will be the subject of our next Essay.

ON THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS.

BY BIELBY PORTEUS.

After our Saviour's crucifixion, Joseph of Arimathea, we are told, laid the body of Jesus in his own new tomb, hewn out of a rock, and rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre. In order to secure themselves against any fraud, the Jews desired the Roman governor, Pilate, to grant them a band of soldiers to guard the sepulchre, lest, as they said, the disciples should come by night and steal the corpse away—Pilate's answer was in these words, "Ye have a watch, go your way, make it as sure as you can: So they went and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch." The Evangelist then proceeds to relate the great event of the resurrection with that ingenuous and natural simplicity which characterizes the sacred historians, and which carries upon the face of it every mark of sincerity and truth.

"In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, to see the sepulchre. And behold there was a great earthquake; for the angel of the Lord descended from

Heaven, and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow. And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel of the Lord answered, and said unto the women, Fear not ye; for I know that ye seek Jesus that was crucified. He is not here, for he is risen from the dead; and behold he goeth before you into Galilee, there ye shall see him. Lo! I have told you. And as they went to tell his disciples, behold Jesus met them, saying, All hail; and they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid; go tell my brethren, that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me. Now, when they were going, behold some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all that was done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, his disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept; and if this comes to the governor's ears, we will persuade him and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews unto this day."

Such is the relation of this wonderful fact given by St. Matthew, which comprehends not only his own account of it, but that also which was circulated in opposition to it by the chief priests and rulers of the Jews. Here then we have fairly before us the two different representations of this event by the friends and by the enemies of Christ; of which the former asserts that it was a real resurrection, the other that it was a fraud; and between these two we must form our opinions, for no third story has been set up that we know of, by any one.

One thing is agreed on by both sides, viz. that the body of Jesus was not to be found in the sepulchre. It was gone; and the question is, by what means? The soldiers gave out that the disciples "came by night, while they slept, and stole it away." But it is not very easy to understand how the soldiers could depose to any thing that passed while they were fast asleep; they could not possibly tell in what manner the body was stolen away, or by whom. Nor, considering the extreme severity of the Roman mili-

tary discipline, is it credible, that if they had been asleep, they would have confessed it. For it was certain death to a Roman soldier to be found sleeping upon guard. Nothing could have prevailed upon them to make such a declaration as that, but a previous promise of impunity and reward from the Jewish rulers; a plain proof that they had been tampered with, and that it was a concerted story.

In the next place, supposing the story true, of what use could the dead body be to the disciples? It could not prove to them, or to others, that their Master was risen from the dead; on the contrary, it must have been a standing and a visible proof of the contrary. It must convince them that he, instead of being the deliverer they expected, was an imposter, and they most cruelly deceived. And why they should choose to keep in their possession, and to have continually before their eyes, a lifeless corpse, which completely blasted all their hopes, and continually reminded them of their bitter disappointment, is somewhat difficult to be imagined.

The tale then, told by the soldiers, is, upon the very face of it a gross and clumsy forgery. The consequence is, that the account given by St. Matthew is the true one.—For if the body was actually gone (an acknowledged point on all sides) and if it was not, as we have proved, stolen away by the disciples, there are but two possible suppositions remaining; either that it was taken away by the Jews and Romans, or that it was raised to life again by the power of God. If the former had been the case, it could only have been for the purpose of confronting and convicting the disciples of falsehood and fraud by the production of the dead body. But the dead body was *not* produced. It was, therefore, as the gospel affirms, raised from the grave, and restored to life. There is no other conceivable alternative left.

And that this was actually the case, is proved by our Lord's appearing, after his resurrection, and not only to the two women who came first to the sepulchre, but to the two disciples going to Emmaus, and to the disciples assembled together at two different times, and to all the apostles, and to above five hundred brethren, at once. And he not only appeared to them silently, but he talked and ate with them;

he showed them his hands and his feet; he made them handle him; he held several long conversations with them; and, at last, ascended up into heaven in their sight.

These were things of which the plainest and most ignorant men could judge. It was impossible for them to be deceived in an object with which they were all acquainted, and which presented itself to all their senses.

But there is another most decisive proof, arising from their own conduct that they were perfectly convinced of the reality of our Lord's resurrection.

It appears that the apostles were far from being men of natural courage and firmness of mind. When our Lord was apprehended, all his disciples, we are told, forsook him and fled. Peter followed him afar off, and went into a palace of the high priest, where the servants warmed themselves, and being there charged with being a disciple of Jesus, he peremptorily denied it three times with vehemence and with oaths. It does not appear that any of his disciples attended in the judgment hall to assist or to support him, and when he was crucified, the only persons who ventured to stand near his cross were his mother, and two or three other women, and John. They all, in short, appeared dismayed and terrified with the fate of their Master, afraid to acknowledge the slightest connection with him, and utterly unable to face the dangers that seemed to menace them. But, immediately after the resurrection of their Lord, a most astonishing change took place in their conduct. From being the most timid of men, they suddenly became courageous, undaunted, and intrepid; they boldly preached the very Jesus, whom but a short time before they had deserted in his greatest distress; and although his crucifixion was fresh before their eyes, and they had reason to expect the same or a similar fate, yet they persisted in avowing themselves his disciples, and told the Jews publicly, "that God had made that same Jesus, whom they had crucified, both Lord and Christ;" and when they were brought before the rulers and elders to be examined respecting the lame man whom they had cured at the gate of the temple, "Be it known unto you all (said they) and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, and whom God raised

from the dead, even by him does this man stand here before you all. This is the stone that was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head stone of the corner; neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

And when a second time they were brought before the council, and forbidden to teach in the name of Jesus, their answer was, "We ought to obey God rather than man. And when they were again reprimanded, and threatened and beaten, yet they ceased not in the temple and in every house, to teach and to preach Jesus Christ; and with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus."

In what manner now shall we account for this sudden and most singular change in the disposition, and as it were in the very constitution of the apostles. If Christ had not risen from the grave, and his dead body was in the possession of his disciples, was this calculated to inspire them with affection for their leader, and with courage to preach a doctrine, which they knew to be false? Would it not, on the contrary, have increased their *natural timidity*, depressed their spirits, extinguished all their zeal, and filled them with indignation and horror against a man who had so grossly deceived them, and robbed them under false pretences, of every thing that was dear and valuable to them in the world? Most unquestionably it would. Nor is it possible to account in any rational way, for the strange revolution which took place in their minds, so soon after their Master's death, but by admitting that they were fully persuaded and satisfied that he rose alive from the grave.

It may be said, perhaps, that this persuasion was the effect, not of irresistable evidence, but of enthusiasm, which made them fancy that some visionary phantom, created solely by their own heated imagination, was the real body of their Lord restored to life. But nothing could be more distant from enthusiasm than the character and conduct of these men, and the courage they manifested, which was perfectly calm, sober, collected, and cool. But what completely repels this suspicion is, that their bitterest adversaries never once accused them of enthusiasm, but charged

them with a crime which was utterly inconsistent with it, fraud and theft; with stealing away the body from the grave. And if they did this, if that dead body was actually before their eyes, how was it possible for any degree of enthusiam short of madness (which was never alledged against them) to mistake a dead body for a living man, whom they saw, and touched and conversed with? No such instance of enthusiasm ever occurred in the world.

The resurrection of our Lord being thus established on the firmest grounds, it affords an unanswerable proof of the truth of our Saviour's pretensions, and consequently, of the truth of his religion; for had he not been what he assumed to be, the Son of God, it is impossible that God should have raised him from the dead, and thereby given his sanction to an impostor. But as he did actually restore him to life, he thereby set his seal to the divinity which he claimed, and acknowledged him, in the most public and authoritative manner, to be "his beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased."

And this evidence of our Lord's divine mission is of the more importance, because our Saviour himself appealed to it as the grand proof of his being sent from heaven to instruct and to redeem mankind. For when he cast the buyers and sellers out of the temple, and the Jews required of him a sign, that is, a miraculous proof, that he had the authority of God for doing those things, his answer was, "Destroy this temple, (meaning his body) and in three days I will raise it up. When, therefore, he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scriptures, and the word which Jesus had said;" and they themselves constantly referred to the resurrection, more than to any other evidence, as the great foundation on which their faith was built.

The reason for this, perhaps, was, that this great event contained in itself, at once, the evidence both of miracle and of prophecy. It was certainly one of the most stupendous manifestations of divine power that could be presented to the observation of mankind; and it was at the same time, the completion of two most remarkable prophesies; that of our Saviour's above mentioned, and that well known one of king David's, which St. Peter expressly ap-

plies to the resurrection of Christ: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption."

Internal marks of truth, and honesty, to be found in the New Testament.

BY THOMAS CHALMERS.

Under this head, it may be right to insist upon the minute accuracy, which runs through the New Testament allusions to the existing manners and circumstances of the times. To appreciate the force of this argument, it would be right to attend to the peculiar situation of Judea, at the time of our Saviour. It was then under the dominion of the Roman emperors, and comes frequently under the notice of the profane historians of that period. From this source we derive a great variety of information, as to the manner in which the emperors conducted the government of their different provinces; what degree of indulgence was allowed to the religious opinions of the people, whom they held in subjection; in how far they were suffered to live under the administration of their own laws; the power which was vested in the presidents of provinces; and a number of other circumstances relative to the criminal and civil jurisprudence of that period. In this way, there is a great number of different points in which the historians of the New Testament can be brought into comparison with the secular historians of the age. The History of Christ and his apostles contains innumerable references to the state of public affairs. It is not the history of obscure and unnoticed individuals. They had attracted much of the public attention. They had been before the governors of the country. They had passed through the established forms of justice; and some of them underwent the trial and punishment of the times. It is easy to perceive, then, that the New Testament writers were led to allude to a number of these circumstances in the political history and constitution of the times, which came under the cognizance of ordinary historians. This was delicate ground for an inventor to tread upon; and particularly, if he lived at an age subse-

quent to the time of his history. He might in this case have fabricated a tale, by confining himself to the obscure and familiar incidents of private history; but it is only for a true and a contemporary historian, to sustain a continued accuracy, through his minute and numerous allusions to the public policy and government of the times.

Within the period of the gospel history, Judea experienced a good many vicissitudes in the state of its government. At one time it formed part of a kingdom under Herod the Great. At another, it formed part of a smaller government under Archelaus. It after this came under the direct administration of a Roman governor, which form was again interrupted for several years, by the elevation of Herod Agrippa to the sovereign power, as exercised by his grandfather; and it is at last left in the form of a province at the conclusion of the evangelical history. There were also frequent changes in the political state of the countries adjacent to Judea; and which are often alluded to in the New Testament. A caprice of the reigning emperor, often gave rise to a new form of government, and a new distribution of territory. It will be readily conceived, how much these perpetual fluctuations in the state of public affairs, both in Judea and its neighborhood, must add to the power and difficulty of that ordeal to which the gospel history has been subjected.

On this part of the subject, there is no want of witnesses with whom to confront the writers of the New Testament. In addition to the Roman writers who have touched upon the affairs of Judea, we have the benefit of a Jewish historian, who has given us a professed history of his own country. From him, as was to be expected, we have a far greater quantity of copious and detailed narrative, relative to the internal affairs of Judea, to the manners of the people, and those particulars which are connected with their religious belief, and ecclesiastical constitution. With many, it will be supposed to add to the value of his testimony, that he was not a Christian; but that, on the other hand, we have every reason to believe him to have been a most zealous and determined enemy to the cause. It is really a most useful exercise, to pursue the harmony which subsists betwixt the writers of the New Testament, and those Jewish

and profane authors, with whom we bring them into comparison. Throughout the whole examination, our attention is confined to forms of justice; successions of governors in different provinces; manners, and political institutions. We are therefore apt to forget the sacredness of the subject; and we appeal to all who have prosecuted this enquiry, if this circumstance is not favorable to their having a closer and more decided impression of the gospel history. By instituting a comparison betwixt the evangelists and cotemporary authors, and restricting our attention to these points, which come under the cognizance of ordinary history, we put the apostles and evangelists on the footing of ordinary historians; and it is for those, who have actually undergone the labor of this examination, to tell how much this circumstance adds to the impression of their authenticity. The mind gets emancipated from the peculiar delusion, which attaches to the sacredness of the subject, and which has the undoubted effect of restraining the confidence of its enquirers. The argument assumes a secular complexion, and the writers of the New Testament are restored to that credit, with which the reader delivers himself up to any other historian, who has a much less weight and quantity of historical evidence in his favor.

It must be observed, that this opens up to us a field of enquiry, which is by far too extensive for the limits of the present article. We cannot even so much as enter into it, and must restrict ourselves to a few general observations on the nature and precise effect of the argument.

In the first place, the accuracy of the numerous allusions to the circumstances of that period, which the gospel history embraces, forms a strong corroboration of that antiquity, which we have already assigned to its writers from external testimony. It amounts to a proof, that it is the production of authors, who lived antecedent to the destruction of Jerusalem, and consequently about the time that is ascribed to them by all the external testimony, which has already been insisted upon. It is that accuracy, which could only be maintained by a contemporary historian. It would be difficult, even for the author of some general speculation, not to betray his time by some occasional allusion to the ephemeral customs and institutions of the period in which

he wrote. But the authors of the New Testament run a much greater risk. There are five different pieces of that collection, which are purely historical, and where there is a continued reference to the characters, and politics, and passing events of the day. The destruction of Jerusalem swept away the whole fabric of Jewish polity, and it is not to be conceived, that the memory of a future generation could have retained that minute, that varied, that intimate acquaintance with the statistics of a nation no longer in existence, which is evinced in every page of the evangelical writers. We find, in point of fact, that both the Heathen and Christian writers of subsequent ages do often betray their ignorance of the particular customs which obtained in Judea, during the time of our Saviour. And it must be esteemed a strong circumstance in favor of the antiquity of the New Testament, that on a subject, in which the chances of detection are so numerous, and where we can scarcely advance a single step in the narrative without the possibility of betraying our time by some mistaken allusion, it stands distinguished from every later composition in being able to bear the most minute and intimate comparison with the contemporary historians of that period.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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BY

AYLETT RAINS.

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